DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 407 541 CE 073 953

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TITLE	Elderlearning. New Frontier in an Aging Society.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-89774-959-6
PUB DATE	97
NOTE	203p.; American Council on Education Series on Higher Education.
AVAILABLE FROM	Oryx Press, 4041 North Central at Indian School Road, Phoenix, AZ 85012-3397 ($29.95).
PUB TYPE	Books (010)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Development; Adult Education; *Adult Learning; Age Discrimination; *Aging (Individuals); *Cognitive Ability; Developmental Stages; *Older Adults

ABSTRACT

This book examines the important role of learning in maintaining the health, quality of life, and longevity of older adults. It includes results of the first comprehensive survey of adult learning in men and women over age 55. Chapter 1 focuses on aging, ageism, and issues raised by the graying of the population in what it calls the "Age" Age. Chapter 2 considers defining "old": chronological, medical, physiological, sociogenic, and cultural aging. Chapter 3 addresses implications of life stage and development for learning, including the four ages theory. Chapter 4 demonstrates that older adults retain the ability to learn and to profit from what they learn. It looks at physiological aging of the brain, nonphysiological factors in older adults' cognitive abilities, and fluid versus crystallized intelligence. Chapter 5 argues that sustained healthy cognitive functioning as one ages is affected by reciprocal relationships between continued cognitive activity, healthy body, positive state of mind, physical exercise, and supportive social environment. Chapter 6 provides a profile of elder learners. Chapters 7-10 discuss older adult learning in colleges and universities, other sources of formal learning, self-directed learning, and other modes of learning. Chapter 11 considers socially constructive aging through work, retirement, volunteerism, and leisure activities. Chapter 12 sets forth an action agenda for the "Age" Age. Appendixes contain the instrument, resources for elder learners, 164 references, and index. (YLB)

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